

Testimony of Susan B Linker
Chief Executive Officer, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary &
Vice President, CT Votes for Animals
Member, Animal Welfare Federation of CT

Concerning House Bill No. 5118
Environment Committee, February 22, 2010

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, members of the Environment Committee, thank you for this opportunity to comment on House Bill 5118- AN ACT CONCERNING CERTIFICATES OF ORIGIN FOR DOGS SOLD BY PET SHOP LICENSEES

On behalf of CT Votes for Animals, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary and the statewide coalition of animal welfare organizations with the Animal Welfare Federation of CT, we strongly urge you to oppose HB 5118.

Last summer you helped us pass and Governor Rell signed the Puppy Mill Law which provides many important protections for consumers and dogs sold in pet shops.

As many of you know, puppies that are sold in pet shops generally come from puppy mills which are large-scale breeding factories. These breeding dogs suffer an unthinkable existence imprisoned in small, dirty cages, breeding litter after litter until they can no longer produce.

After their fertility wanes, breeding animals are often killed, abandoned or sold cheaply to another mill to try and get "one more litter" out of the dog. The result of all this irresponsible, unsanitary breeding is millions of puppies supplied to pet shops, many of which have behavior and/or health problems.

Since most consumers do not know the origin of these puppies and are not familiar with puppy mills. An important part of the puppy mill bill that we passed last session is to provide transparency for the consumers.

Among other things, this law requires pet stores to: (1) maintain a Certificate of Origin on each puppy offered for sale, (2) conspicuously post the information in each Certificate of Origin within 10 feet of the location where the dog is displayed for sale, and (3) file each Certificate of Origin with the Department of Agriculture no later than two days after such sale.

HB 5118 would eliminate this filing requirement and allow each pet store to keep its Certificates of Origin at the pet store for up to a year, viewable only by the Department of Agriculture.

(1) HB 5118 will prevent the general public from being able to use the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to view these Certificates;

(2) Connecticut pet stores will once again be left to police themselves, and they will be able to sell puppy mill puppies with virtually no public oversight; and

(3) the Puppy Mill Law is only a few months old – why are we revising it before it has had a chance to help achieve the objective of preventing the sale of puppy mill dogs in Connecticut pet stores?

Again we urge you to oppose this bill and allow the recently passed legislation to do its intended job and provide protections for animals and transparency for the consumer.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify.